

Wednesday 08/23/06 Rose of Lima

Our topic for this week of homilies is about hearing God's voice in our lives ... and having this happen often. In the Monday 'kick-off' to this topic, I said that God spoke every word necessary for salvation through his only Son, Jesus.... Therefore, the Bible is a most wonderful place to go and ask God's Spirit to communicate with us.

In addition, God speaks through our conscience, through parts of Holy Scripture other than the Gospels, through the Church and the Sacraments... through our feelings, and even positive urgings ... God speaks to us through his creation... through people (pope, bishop, priest, prophets, and perhaps even through a deacon).

However – if I may pick one of these – let's say creation... it isn't communication with God to look up at the majestic Continental Divide and say, "Nice job God ... now what is it I need to get at Safeway?" That's not being open to God... that's not entering into dialogue with God. So for today, let us look to the heritage of saints for help in this idea of communicating with the Good God. A great joy and inspiration to Catholics comes from the stories and examples of our saints.

Today we remember Saint Rose of Lima (1586-1617), Patroness of the Americas... the first canonized saint of the New World. For us to be not just daily communicants... but also daily conversants with Jesus, I wanted to mention the example and the profound depth of faith found in the life of St. Rose. She was the tenth of thirteen children and it is said her mother experienced no pain at her birth.

As a young woman, she was described as exquisitely beautiful, yet she refused to marry. While helping support her family by needlework and growing flowers, she practiced heroic charity and lived as a Third Order Dominican in her parents' home. Rose tenderly cared for the sick, even those with repulsive wounds, and she often obtained miraculous cures for people from the Child Jesus. Which brings us to sickness and suffering... and the work of the Cross.

Do any remember the quote that I shared from C. S. Lewis? "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." And now see if there isn't a similar thread in these words spoken by Jesus as found in the writings of St. Rose.

Our Lord and Savior lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty: "Let all ... know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray and be deceived. This is the only true stairway to paradise, and without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven."

So, for many of us – no.... more likely for all of us – we can expect that God speaks to us in our cancer. God speaks to us in our most painful or continuing medical conditions. His voice calls to us in the silence and loneliness of unremitting pain.

His voice is heard in marriages turned cold and lonely.. or in adult children who have abandoned our values and faith... In these or similar situations, we may listen to hear God speaking to us... That is the message given by Christ to Rose of Lima.

Now – our topic for this week is being open to communication with God... hearing his voice in our lives. Let me ask you a question... Have you ever had days when you've set out to have a good and a hopefully holy day? And near the end of the day, you find that the whole day has gone by and you haven't thought once about God? I'm sad to tell you that this has happened to me many times... I'm trying not to let this happen in my life. How many have heard it said that we ought to go back to work so we can have more time in life? Our Holy Father Benedict spoke about this just days ago... He said, "Christians must guard against the dangers of excessive activity and busyness, regardless of their state of life or occupation. They must do this in order to protect themselves from developing "hardness of heart. Excessive busyness leads to spiritual suffering ... and a loss of grace." The Holy Father noted that the issue of busyness applies to all occupations, including those within the Church. We must have a harmonized, contemplative life to be able to hear God speaking to us. So – if there is a theme to this third day of words on hearing God's voice – it is to quiet our hearts and to know that God speaks to us most certainly when we are carrying our cross... or the gift of the cross He has shared with us. Like the old saying – God is found where we least expect Him... but let us be open and watchful.